Oral History Interview with
Harry Wineroth

Cal Poly Pomona University Library

Harry Wineroth Summary

Harry Wineroth was an Agricultural Inspection major who studied at the Voorhis campus in San Dimas during the Winter and Spring 1940 quarters. Like all Voorhis students at the time, he began his studies at the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo campus. Wineroth was elected student body president at San Luis Obispo for the 1938-1939 school year and was a member of the campus football team. During the summers, Wineroth worked as an agricultural inspector at the California state border. He describes the other students he knew at Voorhis, the faculty and staff, and the setting and activities at the campus. Wineroth recorded himself answering questions that were mailed to him by Kenneth Kitch.

Subject Headings

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Voorhis Campus

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Harry Wineroth

August 15, 1972

Interview Conducted by Kenneth Kitch
Transcribed by Larry Huizar

Begin Side A

HW: The letter that you [Kenneth Kitch] sent to me can—this ah this is ah Henry Wineroth up at San Jose State University—and in answer to your letter regarding my activities at Voorhis, I've decided that the best way is to put it on tape for you as you've requested. And I've thought quite a bit about some of the things that have happened to me that had happened to me while I was at Voorhis and although I was only there for one semester or actually two quarters the Winter Quarter and the Spring Quarter. I certainly did enjoy myself.

First of all the main reason that I went down there, as a history will recall, they had changed the in Agricultural Inspection curriculum to where it left the San Luis Obispo campus and was sent down to Voorhis along with Ed [W.E.] Court and his crew. And being an Ag Inspection major that meant that I had to spend some time down there. Now at the—on the same year they changed transferred the Ag Inspection major down to the Voorhis unit which was the year 1938-39—I was also elected student body president at the San Luis Obispo campus and so that precluded my going to the Voorhis campus at that time. But the following year [1939-1940], well also I was playing football and I had two more seasons of football left, so I played football that year and then the following year, the 39-40 year, I played football stayed the spring I mean the fall quarter at San Luis Obispo and then went for the winter and spring quarters to Voorhis.

Incidentally, both of those summers that I was at San Luis Obispo I had a job as a border inspector for summer working up at Smith River the second summer working at Lake Tahoe and then eventually being shift shifted over to Peavine which was just outside of Reno on the road on 395 on the road to Susanville.

I went down to ah the Voorhis unit with some trepidation. I didn't know just exactly what to expect; I was pretty well-entrenched in San Luis Obispo. I had a lot of friends, had a gal I was going with. So, I wasn't what you might call overjoyed about the necessity of having to go there.

However, upon arriving and getting into a group such as I met the fellows at Sunset Hall or Sunset Cottage is where I stayed, I soon fell into line with what was going on and the real good close companionship and the close friendships that you find in a group that are living in such a beautiful atmosphere as that Voorhis campus at that time. It was certainly conducive to studying and I don't pretend to ever be what might be called a great student. I had probably had lower than average marks, but I found that it was easier for me to study at Voorhis it was easier for me to get reasonably good grades. And still participate in a lot activities with the people there.

So, my coming to Voorhis was necessitated by my curriculum of course and at that time Vern [Vernon] Meacham was the Superintendent or the Vice President in charge of the Voorhis unit; he had Ed [W.E.] Court there, Stanton Gray in Production, and Howard Hawkins in the citrus end of the thing. Stan King was handling our Ornamental Horticulture and of course that great and glorious gal Bernie Greenwell served us that wonderful food in the cafeteria. Of course, I knew Bernie very well from her days up at Cal Poly up at San Luis and her sister Mrs. King. But we had what I would call a just a tremendously happy family. Something that was kind of a great *espirit de corps* among the group and everybody helped each other out. I took some courses there that normally would've caused me quite of bit of problems up at San Luis Obispo and I had no problem with them at all at the Voorhis campus.

I lived in Sunset and we had such great guys in sunset there was Art Tansky and Dick Davis. Incidentally, Dick Davis is teaching Vocational Ag up here; he's an Ag Mechanics teacher in the San Jose City School System. I see Dick once in a while in fact he had one of my sons in class. I see Dick every once in a while; we had a Charlie (?) Dana, a fellow by the name of Sousa. I had a roommate by the name of Schoenman (?) and in Sunset Hall we had just a good close group.

I can recall some of the things we used to do sitting around that big fireplace in that beautiful living room we would ah give a freshman student a pillowcase and send him out to get us some oranges. And I guess Howard Hawkins just never could get any production records out of those trees around the cottages there because we kept them pretty well cleaned off. So, I think he probably had to figure in the additional production that those trees had and chalk it off to profit loss or maybe he credited Bernie Greenwell and the cafeteria for it because we certainly consumed quite a pile and of course anytime we were going home for the weekend and we frequently went somewhere either I would I was going to San Luis Obispo to see that gal friend and I'd take Davis too and he lived in one of the little towns on the way up.

Sousa lived in Santa Maria and so did Dana and I'd take those guys with me and we would also take three or four sacks of oranges with us to our friends and family so we were pretty free with the with the oranges. When the avocadoes were ripe, we took a few of those along with us, but we made sure that we didn't take too many unnecessarily.

Speaking about people who lived in that dorm, we also had a fellow by the name Raul Richmond. His brother Wes was up at San Luis Obispo when I was up there and he was on the football team with us. In fact, Raul played one year with us up there then he moved down to the Voorhis unit. He was in the dorm with us and it was my pleasure just recently to run across Raul Richmond again. He's now with Pitney Bowes in the division where they sell copying machines and he appears to be doing quite a good job. He recently moved from where he was selling Genie garage doors to the Pitney Bowes company and he looks the same tall skinny real happy go lucky type. Really, he was one of the people that I remember most.

When I think back on some of the other people that we had there I think back and think of some of the faculty members and staff there—Bob Balch who was running the garage and handling buildings and grounds and maintenance on the whole campus. I worked for him up in the garage greasing trucks and changing tires and trying to do a little mechanic work. I wasn't much of a mechanic. I don't suspect that I did much to help Bob out probably caused him more problems,

but he was a very pleasant individual just a fine person to work for and I enjoyed working for him very much.

We had Stanton Gray who was in charge of the deciduous production area on the campus We worked with Stan down on the bottom land down there doing a lot of pruning, grafting, pest control work in general learning quite a bit.

Then we had Ed [W.E.] Court. Ed had of course the Ag Inspection end of the thing. I knew Ed very well. I got to know his family well too because I used to babysit his children on Fridays and Saturday nights when I was available. I'd take my books up there and for 30 cents an hour I'd babysit the kids. And his wife used to leave a piece of pie for me or some cake every once in a while but also one of the things that was a prerequisite there [was] I had to know how to wash dishes cause she would always leave the dishes for me and so I guess maybe that was the one time I really got my hands clean down there.

It was kind of an interesting situation too. I think it was in the year 1940, the summer of 1940, I was working as ah the head inspector at the Peavine station just outside of Reno on the road 395 going to Susanville. And I used to have four inspectors with me up there and this summer I had Ed [W.E.] Court come up as an inspector, which again is one of the ways in which he did a fine job of teaching Ag Inspection having the opportunity to get out there as an inspector himself.

While Ed was up there we had a well drilled cause we used to have haul our water right out in [unintelligible] desert we put in a [unintelligible] plant where we had to use to use gasoline lanterns and we had electricity wired to all the little cabins we had there we've had kind of an interesting summer.

Then of course we had Vern Meacham who was in charge of the Voorhis unit at that time and he had that great family of his. I knew the family when I was in San Luis Obispo and ah Mrs. Meacham always took good care of me whenever I came by she always had some cookies and stuff there and of course my great favorite was Meach's daughter Happy who was just a terrific athlete and she was out there playing football with us and baseball right out on the grass in front of the cottage, and it was my pleasure later to see Happy develop into a very beautiful young lady and happily married.

Howard Hawkins living way down in the back end of the campus there with his family was a tremendously interesting person in as much as he was handling citrus production. And when I first met Howard, he was in poultry up at the San Luis Obispo, but he certainly knew what he was talking about as far as the citrus was concerned and I learned quite a bit from him.

It was kind of an interesting thing some of the people we had in Sunset Cottage we had Art Tansky, Wilbur Sousa, Dick Davis, and Dick (?) Dana and ah another fella by the name of Seldon Kempton. And Kempton I think is now involved in buildings and grounds or in maintenance in the Voorhis, in the Kellogg Unit there. I would recall we used to want to go after studying for three or four hours. We'd want to go out and have a milkshake or something like that, Kempton who was a diabetic used to have to get a shot first. So, he'd go into his room and hit himself with the insulin and away we go up there and get ourselves a milkshake.

We had another fella out there who's an epileptic by the name of Heinz. And Heinz used to have a few problems nothing of any even great extent. He was kind of an interesting kid. He never was able to excel in anything he was a great collector of USDA bulletins and California State Department of Agriculture bulletins. I guess he had one of the best libraries of anybody in [unintelligible] and with that kind of stuff. But I remember one time when we were going up for a milkshake, he indicated that he could eat more ice cream sundaes than anybody else and he said he could eat fifteen. And the fellow there that was running the ice cream parlor said well if you can I'll furnish them and so away he went he knocked out about eight.

End of side A

Begin side B

Other side now—after knocking out eight of those, he went outside and got rid of them, came back, and ate the other seven and we hauled him home. And by that time he was pretty well-chilled so we had to put him in a hot bath and kind of take care of him I don't suspect we helped his epilepsy a bit but then that's the way it goes.

Another thing we did down there we built a barbecue pit out behind sunset and did a great job of having a barbecue for Poly Vue. Barbecue pit was one those big ones similar to the ones they had up at the San Luis Obispo down in the grove. We barbecued quite a number of pounds of meat. I recall the fella we bought the meat from gave us a couple of choice steaks for ourselves and by the time we got to barbecuing the rest of the meat we were so tired and so smoked filled and hot that we didn't feel like eating. So, we went up and dived in the pool and stayed there for a while and came back about [unintelligible] had our barbecue a couple hours later. At that we were really tired out.

I think back on all of my times at the Voorhis unit and I recall also we had our athletic teams and I played basketball we had Glenn Tovani who was the auditor or the bookkeeper down there. I knew Glenn up at San Luis Obispo and Glenn was a very terrific athlete himself a tremendous basketball player!

We played basketball and I played for the San Luis Obispo team and came down there and we had quite an interesting team. We beat quite a number of teams in the local area there and we went up played Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo and only lost to them by two points. I had one of my better seasons that year of course I could never keep from fouling out, but I did have an interesting season and we picked up a few points.

It was a lot of fun. I remember we had softball and the whole group as a whole participated whenever there was anything going on in the campus it was a campus-wide thing. Of course, with a campus that size this was easily done but still everybody helped everybody else out. I remember one time a couple of the fellas piled a car up down at the bottom of the hill and we hauled that car up and we kinda helped him fix it up and in general doing some of the nice kind of things that you don't see going on now a days.

We also were all on a crew for smudging. And whenever the word would come in on those cold nights that was going to frost—I forget whose crew we were we were on some orchard around there close by or grove I guess I should say you can see I lost a little touch with my agriculture get involved with text books now—but as such we were on call all the time and we went out a few times. I don't recall it was any big thing

I also recall it was quite a thing when—and maybe some of the other fellas mentioned this—when we would be sitting around in the dorm or outside on those lovely evenings fall, I mean spring evening, and part of the summertime we could see over towards Pomona where they had the Fox Theatre in Pomona and if they had a big spotlight going on we knew they had a preview and so we would all pile in in what cars we had.

I had an old Chevrolet sedan it was actually only about a four-passenger car or maybe five at the most, and we'd sometimes get eight, and ten, twelve people in that thing. We never had more than about 25, 30 cents worth of gas in it. But actually, that was all we needed. We'd go over to Pomona, we'd go to the show over there and we'd see not only the regular bill but also some previews of some of the new pictures that were coming out and this was always kinda thrill for us. Once in a while we'd see a movie star but not too often.

But it was a tremendously interesting situation. I enjoyed myself down there and as I said, it was very conducive to doing a good job of studying. I think I benefited terrifically by my association with not only the atmosphere but with the faculty that were there because they were a great bunch of people and I've never regretted at any time the fact that I went to the Voorhis unit.

I understand that there a many new things happening with the Kellogg campus. I am aware of some of the problems and some of the progress that's being made. [It's] kind of interesting to me to see some of the people that you have down there. And of course, Henry House is one of my great friends. And he is, I guess, just about one of the finest people I've ever known and most energetic little devil tremendous little football player pound for pound he would have been all-American on anybody's team

Ken, I hope this is what you had in mind I hope I contributed something it was really my pleasure. And a definite benefit that I derived from my association with the Voorhis unit and I just wished that more people could have gone there and enjoyed the complete good friendly atmosphere and I'm sure that had they done that it would've been a different story for a lot of people Hope this is what you wanted and next time I'm down your way I'll stop by and see you.

This was Harry Wineroth at California State University, San Jose manager of the bookstore there formerly Ag Inspection major at Cal Poly.

I finally ended up getting out of the Ag Inspection field, going into Agricultural Education. I taught for three years and then went back to the home campus at San Luis Obispo working with the Dean of Students there. And when the bookstore manager died and the graduate manager resigned, they sent me downstairs to keep an eye on those things and that's where I learned the bookstore business. I was there for five years and after being there for five years in the capacity of bookstore manager and graduate manager [I] had the opportunity to come to San Jose State

and now the California State University at San Jose and I've been there since 1956 and now have the bookstore as well as the feeding services on the campus

End of side B.

End of interview

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